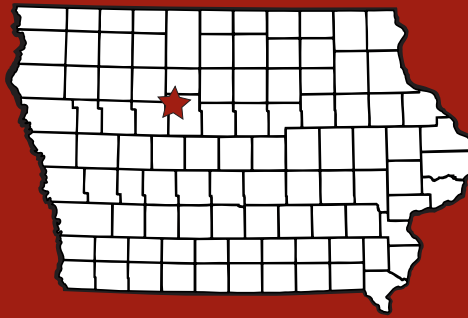




**Doug Seltz**  
Clare, Iowa  
Corn/Soybeans  
3,500 Acres



# Strip-Till

## Producer Profile



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

**Doug Seltz transitioned to strip-till in fall 2008 after years of research and seeing improvements in strip-till equipment and technology.**

### Land/Soil Type

Doug Seltz farms east and west of the Des Moines River, just north of Fort Dodge in Webster County. He says his Webster and Nicollet soils on the east side of the river are heavy, rich and saturated in the spring. Soils on his cropland west of the river vary, both light and heavy, on a rolling landscape. He says his biggest resource concerns are soil erosion and compaction.

### Soil Sampling

Every four years Seltz grid samples 2.5 grids per acre. He says soil sampling results tell him the amount of organic matter build-up. "Soil sampling helps manage fertility costs. If you're at optimum levels, you don't need to apply fertilizer there," he says.

### Fertility Plan

Seltz splits nitrogen applications between fall and spring. In the fall, he applies approximately 100 pounds with N-Serve® nitrogen stabilizer. He applies Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) in the spring, along with 32% N after planting. Seltz also puts down potash in bean stubble in the spring.

He uses GPS to place fertilizer. "I put fertilizer only where it needs to be. We only fertilize for one crop year, not two crop years, like a lot of people are doing," he says.

### Strips

Seltz will typically cut strips in the fall, prior to planting. The strips will be approximately 7-inches deep, 7-8 inches wide, and 30 inches apart. The strips are made the same in corn and soybean residue. When Seltz planted into the strips for the first time, he said it went better than anticipated. "They were the best planting conditions we've ever seen," he said. "I think the strips are responding quite well. We endured a one and a half inch rain event with no ponding."

Seltz's strip-till technique helps reduce soil erosion and improve water quality. By building a small ridge, Seltz directs rainwater to high residue areas before it moves off the field.

### Equipment

Seltz invested in a BLU-JET Strip-Till System, which includes a residue manager to sweep away residue and provide a cleaner strip, a large couler, and a shank conducive to stirring the soil and breaking up compacted layers, and covering disks for filling and hilling the disturbed area.

Seltz uses a Montag Auto Steering Cart that can divide fertilizer applications into two separate sections. The Ag Leader Direct Command provides variable rate application control over fertilizer application. "It has a script where it reads off a card and places the appropriate products in the field - one at a time or at the same time - whatever is called for," says Seltz.

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# Strip-Till

## Producer Profile

**Doug Seltz**



### Economic Benefits

Seltz estimates he invested \$95,000 in machinery and equipment to transition into a strip-till system. He hopes it will pay for itself in about three years. "I eliminated a field conditioner and a stalk chopper," he says. "I will be able to cut fuel consumption at least in half. I should be able to cut my fertilizer cost by at least 30 percent, and I think I'll be able to eliminate a tractor, too."

Another economic benefit is financial assistance he is receiving through the NRCS-administered Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Iowans who would like to start strip-tilling can receive financial assistance on up to 320 acres. Visit your local NRCS office for more details.

### Performance/Yields

Conservation tillage and no-till have been part of Seltz's operation for years, and he believes strip-till will produce similar soft, less compact ground.

Even though he has not completed a full crop year with strip-till, he believes yields will remain about the same. "In dry years I think I will actually out-yield producers who till," he says. "And in wet years, strips will produce a warm, dry seedbed."

### Challenges

A few equipment adjustments and a wet fall of 2008 have been the biggest challenges for Seltz. He plans on strip-tilling in the fall, but conditions kept him out of several

fields his first year. Seltz completed strip-tilling his cropland in the spring.

"I knew what I was getting into, because I researched the strip-till process for three or four years," he said. "My goal is to strip it, plant it, spray it and combine it."

### Tips

Seltz says his main management tip is to avoid strip-tilling overly saturated soils. "The key to strip-till is to stay out of the fields when it's too wet because you'll create clumps or balls of soil that turn as hard as concrete," he says.

To help offset equipment set-up costs Seltz is sharing equipment with his brother, Kirk, and another farm family. Seltz is doing much of the work in the fall, while his partner is working in the spring. "This will allow us to run equipment on a lot more acres, and our cost of production will go down," he said. "It's important to partner with someone who shares the same work ethic and ideas."

Seltz said he advises potential strip-tillers to do their homework. "Read articles, talk to NRCS and ISU Extension, look at equipment, attend shows, and make decisions based on all of that," he said. "Strip-tillers I've talked to say, 'Why didn't I do this sooner?'"

### Contact Doug Seltz

Seltz is available to answer your questions about strip-till:

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